

Amendments to the Specification:

Please add the following new paragraphs after paragraph [0024] beginning at page 4, line 23:

[0024.1] Fig. 6A is a top plan view of an illustrative embodiment ballistic vest of the present invention;

[0024.2] Fig. 6B is a top plan view of an illustrative embodiment flexible armor member of the present invention;

Please replace the paragraph [0040], beginning at page 7, line 21, with the following amended paragraph:

[0040] Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the illustrative belt 12 including a ballistic insert 70 having a central portion 72 formed of a ballistic material. Opposing upper and lower edge portions 74 and 76 of the belt 12 are formed by a pair of reinforcing members, illustratively ballistic cords 82 and 84 coupled to upper and lower edges 78 and 80 of the central portion 72, thereby defining a ballistic edge reinforcement system 86. While in the present description, the ballistic edge reinforcement system 86 is described in connection with the belt 12, it should be appreciated that the invention may find equal applicability with any article of clothing or article utilizing flexible or soft body armor or ballistic material including, but not limited to, ballistic vests, ballistic pants or any other ballistic garment designed to be worn over the body. An illustrative ballistic vest 85 including reinforcing members, such as ballistic cords 82 and 84, is shown in Fig. 6A. Further, the invention may also find applicability with any other flexible or soft armor application in which a reinforced edge is useful, including, but not limited to: vehicle/vessel/aircraft armor, ballistic shields or bomb/explosive blast mats. An illustrative flexible armor member 87 including a reinforcing member, such as ballistic cord 82, is shown in Fig. 6B.

Please replace the paragraph [0044], beginning at page 8, line 26, with the following amended paragraph:

[0044] Traditionally, a ballistic material prevents the penetration of the projectile 90 through the material and into the body of a person. A traditional ballistic material does not have a suitable edge reinforcement. As such, when the projectile 90 strikes the edge of the ballistic material, it tends to roll the ballistic material and may allow the projectile 90 to penetrate the person. With the addition of the ballistic cord ~~90~~ 82, or other suitable edge reinforcement, when the projectile 90 contacts the ballistic material, in the form of the central portion 72 of the belt 12 in Figs. 7-9 (or other garment in further illustrative embodiments of the ballistic material), the ballistic cord 82, or other suitable edge reinforcement, prevents the rolling of the central portion 72 of ballistic material about the peripheral edge 78 in the direction of impact from the projectile 90.

Please replace the paragraph [0049], beginning at page 10, line 9, with the following amended paragraph:

[0049] Figs. 13, 14, and 15 show a belt closure system 110 comprising a first securing member 112 configured to releasably attach to a second securing member 114 for securing together opposing first and second ends 116 and 118 of a belt 120. The first securing member 112 includes body 122 configured to receive, and be supported proximate, the first end 116 of the belt 120. A lock, in the form of an L-shaped bracket 124 (Fig. 14) is supported for pivoting movement by the body 122 through a hinge or pivot 126. The bracket 124 is configured to releasably secure the body 122 to the first end 116 of the belt 120. A J-shaped hook 128 is supported by the body 122 and is configured to operably couple with the second securing member 114. The second securing member 114 includes a frame 130, a pair of tangs ~~132~~ 146 pivotably supported by the frame 130, and a support bar or center vertical member 134 coupled to the frame 130. Frame 130 further comprises a first outer vertical member 136 and a second outer vertical member 138.